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ABSTRACT

To study the relationship between the school and the rural family, and particularly to establish reasons for student dropout, a questionnaire was administered in 1973 to 103 students who dropped out of school in 2 large rural towns in the Veneto, Italy. Responses indicated that about 60% of the adolescents left school to help out the family or because what the school taught was seen as not relevant or useful. Other causes of student dropout included: school difficulties, confirmed by grades repeated (35.6%); family authority and internal relationships (22.3%); peer group influence (17.5%); health reasons (12.6%); in-class teacher discrimination (11.2%); discrimination by classmates (9.7%); and difficulty in traveling the distance to school (9.7%). The fact that these clusters of causes added up to more than 100% indicated that the decision to drop out of school early was not the result of a single, clearly defined motivation. Early abandonment of obligatory schooling by rural (especially farm) children is proposed as an indicator of the non-existent relationship between the school and the rural world: to remedy the situation the complex farm and rural culture should be incorporated into the culture, teaching methods and content of the school. (CM)

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THE REASONS WHY FARM CHILDREN DROP OUT OF SCHOOL

Paper presented at the

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ABSTRACT

Title: The reasons why farm children drop out of school

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This paper examines the uneasy relation between the school and the rural family, distinguished by a whole series of asymmetries within societal segments and subsystems by means of a variable significantly and radically indicative of the weight of the most important causes of failure in school, in particular of its gravest consequence, the premature abandonment of compulsory schooling.
The study was carried out on 103 children who dropped out of school in 1973 in two large rural towns in the Veneto. The data, collected by means of a questionnaire, have been subjected to factor analysis, in the solution of principal components. Rotation in the "varimax" method has been used. We thus obtained 14 factors, which account for 69.274% of the total variance of the 42 initial variables.
The first conclusion to be drawn from quantification of the importance of the various causes regards the fact that about 60% of the youngsters left school to help out the family (factor 1) or because they do not see any real use for what the school teaches, and another 22.3% left school because of family pressure in this sense (factor 8), even though in both cases the school record was not very bad at the time of dropping out.

On the other hand, the causes of dropping out which are linked to school difficulties, as well as to the feeling of being discriminated against by teachers and classmates (Factors 2 and 13), bring the relation with the school inside the classroom; they concern not only the content imparted, but also the methods, styles, and rhythms by which the content becomes schooling and education, and hence also a comparison of oneself, one's family, and one's values with other boys and girls and with the cultural values of other families. Leaving aside the very specific causes of dropping out which regard the child's health and the distance between home and school (factor 9), a third conclusion regards the considerable influence that the peer group subculture (factor 5) has in causing the decision to drop out.

1. The Uneasy Relationship Between School and Family in Rural Areas

Schools in rural areas ought to ensure two things to the rural family and its agricultural subsystem: (1) the formation of the labor force needed to maintain the system (P. Guidicini, 1974; various authors, 1972), and hence a vocational training suitable to the system's technological level and productive possibilities; and (2) the socialization of the individual to the cultural and vocational values and opportunities of a pluralistic society, so that he can freely choose to act in those sectors of the system that he feels are best suited to him. This can only come about if the school, in its educational planning, methodology, and testing procedures faithfully reproduces, includes, and reflects the objectives of the rural productive and cultural systems (A.Ardigò, 1966; M. Barbagli, 1972; V.Cesareo, 1974). In actual fact, the school system's relationship to society diverges widely from this theoretical model because it operates a social selection; thus the school becomes a channel for communicating, and enforcing conformity with, the values peculiar to the dominant social classes and subsystems, and other subsystems are included only on the ideological (and hence altered) terms imposed by the dominant cultures. In other words, the negative function of the school is to base its selection on class values and abilities; its positive function has to do only with the attainment of social status (more vertical than horizontal), consequent on one's overcoming the selection hurdles and hence having an "acquired fitness" to progress on the ladder of social stratification (A.Schizzerotto, 1974, pp.255-308).

This uneasy relationship can easily be traced back to a whole series of asymmetries within societal sectors and subsystems: disregard for the rural vocation and lifestyle, for the agricultural productive system, for the community and the "traditional", for the knowledge of concrete things; and an exaggerated regard for the urban lifestyle, the industrial system, for the society and the "modern", for abstract knowledge and the consequent values of personal achievement (1).

A long research tradition, with its very wide range of findings (O.Andreani, 1974, pp.17-62), highlights the close relationship between social class and mental ability (J.Maxwell, 1953; L.C.D.Kemp, 1955; J.S.McPherson, 1958; J.E.Meade and A.S.Parkes, 1966; H.R.Stub, 1975; M.Wittig, 1976) and, more generally, between social class, home life and success in school. The decisive factors, which determine success or failure in school, are: intelligence and the socio-economic status of the family, in particular whether the family members work outside the home and for what part of the day, how crowded the dwelling is, and how great the family income is (C.Burt, 1943; E.D.Fraser, 1959; S.Wiseman, 1964). The atmosphere in the home is of fundamental importance; affection, support, and encouragement (2) can provide the stimulus for success and stress or underplay the need for it (this is a greater prerogative of the middle classes(cf. D.C.McClelland, J.W.Atkinson, K.A.Clark, L.E.Lowell, 1953). Furthermore, the cultural values of the different social classes, and the relation between these values and those on which the didactic and educative activities of the school are based, are of great importance. The second stage (after social factors) in the sequence of effects that leads to success in school,and hence motivates toward studying (M.Deutsch, I.Katz, A.R.Jensen, 1968; P.E. Vernon, 1969; E.Cerquetti, 1969; G.Avanzini, 1972; P.Colaprete, 1973; A.R.Jensen, 1973) is the channeling of personal interests more towards intellectual problems than towards practical activities and the use of a different language (the "elaborated code" of the middle and upper classes and the "restricted code" of the lower classes, in Bernstein's analysis (Bernstein, 1966)).

Other factors determining success in school are the degree of preparation of the teachers and the creation, in classroom life, of groups of students who are more or less distant from the teacher, of favorites and outcasts (W.S.Mason, R.J.Dressel, R.K.Bain, 1959; V.Cesareo, 1968; M.Barbagli and M.Dei, 1969; T.Legatt, 1970; M.Livolsi, A.Schizzerotto, R. Porro and G.Chiari, 1974; D.C.Lortie, 1975; Iref,1976; A. Cobalti, 1979). It is at this level that the values underlying the

educational and didactic activity and upholding the discrimination of the starting values and cultures of the pupils are seen in full play, alongside the new bases for what, in a system of automatic promotions, is called hidden selection (M.Livolsi, 1974), which occurs because of the teachers' resistance to change (M.Barbagli and M.Dei, 1969). This selection is carried out directly by the teachers on the basis of objectives and methods aimed at penalizing the cultures and technical abilities not in harmony with them. The class as a group (or rather, as a medley of different groups organized in accordance with hierarchies based on intellectual, manual, physical and other abilities) is both a consequence of and an underpinning for success or failure in school. It is linked to the peer group, its influence on the pupil, or its rejection of him, as is clearly shown in the research data available for examination.

The rural family's scholastic discrimination of the young follows the same pattern. In Contadino, una scelta? the concrete factors that influence the good, or less good, school performance of farmworkers' children are sketched. Indeed, school repeaters are consistently more likely to be children of farmworkers who are engaged in the farm work (C = 0.2), live in families composed only of parents and children (C = 0.17), prefer manual and concrete subjects to abstract and humanistic ones (C = 0.17), live in a southern province (C = 0.17), have parents with very little formal instruction (C = 0.16), have many siblings (C = 0.14), are male (C = 0.15 and 0.11 for the two school cycles), and have begun their obligatory schooling later than others (C = 0.13) (B.Benvenuti and A.Casparini, 1978, pp.85-101).

All these relations underline, even at an intuitive level, the subordinate status that the rural world has with respect to the school system, and how even the basic function of training future farmworkers is distorted by the imposition of values and experiences which are often at odds with agricultural values and experiences, and with those "useful" to the functioning of the agricultural system. This came out strongly in the often-stereotyped characterization of agricultural and industrial work developed by farmworkers and especially by their children, and in

the influence that this characterization has on these adolescents' vocational and scholastic decisions, as well as on their image of their own future and that of their family (A.Gasparini, 1976, 1977, 1978).

The problem now, and the main objective of this study, is to explore the meaning of this discrimination against the agricultural world, grasping the exact weight of the most important causes of failure in school, in particular of its gravest consequence, the premature abandonment of compulsory schooling. This perspective, precisely on account of its radical nature, lays bare the mechanisms by which the rural and agricultural reality is banished from the school.

Some studies on school dropouts have tried to go beyond the mere description of the size of the phenomenon (Comitato Tecnico per la Programmazione Scolastica, 1971, p.257; M. Livolsi, 1974, pp.36-7; A.Mangano and S.Gambareri, 1977, p.130). They have sought its causes, which are very often: the will of the family or the internalization of its "needs", the wish to move on soon to a manual job, difficulties at school, bad relationships with teachers and peers, etc. (A.Visalberghi, 1964; G.Pilone, 1965; P.Luzzato Fegiz, 1966; Scuola di Barbiana, 1967; M.Lucchetti, 1969; T.Aymone, 1972; C.Busnelli, E.Dall'Aglio and P.Faina, 1974; F.Padoa Schioppa, 1974; M.Gattullo, 1967; R.Gay, 1978). These motivations often exist long before the child concerned takes the decision to leave school; this happened particularly when attendance at the junior high school (media inferiore) was obligatory only on paper (M.Lucchetti, 1969, pp.47-59, 96). The aim of this study is even more subtle, because we wish to "explain" these very motivations for dropping out. This is done by analyzing them in the light of the working and productive organization of the family, its rhythms and life styles, its socio-economic and socio-cultural status, the existence of school dropout behavior models, the decision-making atmosphere and pressure or liberality shown by the family or relatives, the importance of the peer group in the social life and decisions of the droupout, etc.

This comparison thus helps to identify precisely the many aspects of the rural and agricultural situation which, in the uneasy relation

with the school, act as support and accelerator to the marginality of the farmworld's cultural and socio-economic system. If we know the mechanisms involved and can evaluate their relative weight, we may be able to interest the agricultural system and the rural family in the educative, didactic and informational processes of the school; then, through a more and more awaited participation of the family, we may effect a "cultural revolution" of the school caused precisely by the inclusion in it of the experiences, values, and economic and social principles of the subsystem known as "agriculture".

2. The Research Method

The research was carried out in 1973 in the province of Treviso, in the municipalities of Castelfranco Veneto and Vedelago. These communities border on one another and have rather similar economic structures, although the former is more tertiary and industrial and the latter more agricultural.

The information needed to reach our objectives was collected by means of a questionnaire which was administered to all the adolescents who had begun their obligatory schooling in 1958-59 and who, in the school year 1969-70, could still have been in school (if repeaters), or else withdrew by the end of that year. The dropouts, thus defined, were 115. We succeeded in interviewing 103 of them. Moreover, we interviewed the adolescents who had dropped out, whether they belonged to farmworkers' families or not. By so doing we wished to reach all the families of dropouts and living in a rural context, and secondly to understand how this type of school choice comes about in the farm family, by comparing it with the non-farm family.

We discussed the form of the questionnaire with Prof. Edgar F. Borgatta (3) and compared the results of similar researches already conducted; after he had tried it out on the spot with adolescents having similar backgrounds to those we wished to interview, the questionnaire was finally structured as follows:

1) The reasons for dropping out of school; there was an open question to answer, as well as the following items to mark as being (1) very (2) rather (3) not very (4) not at all important in causing the decision to drop out of school:

-- I wanted to begin earning money. A good opportunity came along.
-- School was difficult, and I was a little behind
-- I wanted to help out my family
-- The school I had to attend was far away from home and difficult to get to
-- For my health
-- I found it difficult to study because I didn't like it
-- For the job I want to do I had learned all I needed to know in previous years
-- My family didn't want me to go on attending school
-- My teacher(s) treated me differently from the other pupils who did better at school
-- My family didn't have the money to keep me in school
-- My classmates made me feel different from them because I was a bit behind in my studies
-- Most of my best friends at that time, not only schoolmates, dropped out
-- The subjects they taught at school didn't interest me at all.

2) the making of the decision, at the level of the parents, relatives living in the family, friends of the parents and outside relatives, and the peer group; the existence of dropout models within the family, especially among brothers and sisters;

3) the school career (years repeated) of the adolescent and the distance between school and home;

4) the level of education of the parents;

5) the structure of the family, its relations with the outside world and with the farm, the job structure existing in it, its being the manager of a farm;

6) the socio-economic status (SES) of the family, seen both in its housing conditions and semi-durable goods possessed, and in its lifestyle (4);

7) attachment of self to the original home and the location of the residence in the isolated area of the farm or in town.

The information thus collected has been analyzed both by means of crossings and by correlations and factor analysis, to which 42 of the 81 variable characters obtained from the questionnaire were submitted. This limited number naturally includes those that, due to their very structure, answered to the needs of factor analysis; hence, open questions and questions too badly distributed were excluded.

3. Factors in the Decision to Drop out of School

The need to reduce the manifold bits of information carried by the 42 variables to the essential, independent ones that underlie them induced us to analyze the relative data with the technique of factor analysis, in the solution of the principal components and placing 1 in the main diagonal. Rotation in the "varimax" method has been used. We thus obtained 14 factors, which account for 69.247% of the total variance of the 42 initial variables (Table 1).

Of these factors, some are very significant, both methodologically and conceptually, while others are less so. In fact, some of them group together three or more original variables; they regard both reasons given for leaving school and the socio-economic status of the farm and farm (or at least rural) family. Here below we discuss only those factors which are directly connected with the decision to leave school, excluding all those not so directly linked.

Table 1 - Matrix of the loadings of Dropping out of the obligatory school program (principal components -- varimax rotation).

	Factors														
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV	h^2
1. Work done by the adolescent	.02	-.02	.09	.16	-.05	-.02	-.01	-.09	-.01	.02	(-.83)	.06	-.08	.02	.74
2. "Desire to earn money right away"	(-.63)	.19	-.24	.08	.12	-.09	.11	-.12	.02	-.03	.26	-.03	-.05	.07	.62
3. "School was hard"	-.14	(.62)	.16	.16	.07	-.10	-.22	-.13	.13	.13	.06	.06	.27	.07	.65
4. "I wanted to help out my family"	(-.58)	-.27	.14	-.13	.14	-.17	-.17	-.19	.10	-.20	.16	.08	-.22	.18	.72
5. School far away and hard to reach	-.24	.10	-.05	-.12	-.01	.07	-.07	.01	(.66)	-.08	-.03	-.00	.18	.16	.59
6. Health	-.08	-.10	-.01	.10	-.18	-.13	.12	.11	.11	.03	.17	-.04	(.77)	-.06	.75
7. "Studying difficult because I didn't like it"	-.15	(.76)	.12	-.03	.02	.01	.14	.14	.09	-.06	-.06	-.08	-.08	.00	.69
8. "I've studied enough already"	(-.50)	.18	-.20	.05	-.22	.06	-.05	-.18	-.10	(-.37)	.28	-.06	-.25	-.07	.71
9. "My family didn't want me to go on"	-.29	-.01	-.11	-.06	.14	-.16	-.08	(-.70)	-.12	-.05	.19	.13	-.06	-.12	.73
10. "The teachers treated me differently"	(.43)	.10	(.31)	.18	-.07	.19	-.23	-.16	.09	-.10	-.12	-.18	(.42)	.08	.69
11. "My family didn't have the money"	(-.44)	-.21	-.24	.02	.13	-.25	-.05	(-.51)	.08	-.20	.11	.19	.01	.01	.74
12. "My classmates made me feel different"	.06	(.32)	.14	-.15	.17	.24	-.17	-.08	-.22	-.06	-.15	-.11	(.57)	-.08	.70
13. "My friends didn't go on"	-.13	.06	.08	-.04	(.67)	.11	(.34)	-.17	-.19	.12	-.06	-.03	-.06	.12	.70
14. "The things taught weren't interesting"	-.21	(.49)	-.03	.15	-.15	.02	.23	-.05	.05	-.10	(.38)	.11	(-.31)	-.13	.67

Table 1 (Continued)

15. The parents favored dropping out	.01	-.17	.01	-.05	.00	-.01	-.12	-.76	-.09	.13	-.16	-.08	.02	.04	.68
16. No. of friends who dropped out	-.10	.05	.08	-.13	-.78	-.02	.10	.05	-.06	-.09	-.09	.08	.03	.19	.72
17. No. of brothers who dropped out	-.05	-.02	-.06	.62	-.09	.12	.04	.36	-.10	.04	-.12	-.11	-.05	.09	.63
18. No. of sisters who dropped out	.25	-.14	.07	.54	.04	.30	-.12	.34	-.05	-.10	.18	-.05	-.08	-.26	.72
19. No. of years repeated	-.28	-.64	.02	.19	.06	-.01	-.01	-.25	-.08	-.08	-.03	-.13	-.01	-.01	.62
20. Mother's education level	-.06	.09	-.09	-.09	-.19	-.59	-.00	-.15	.07	.08	-.01	-.10	-.41	-.12	.63
21. Father's age	.24	.03	-.00	.06	-.09	.16	.01	.07	.03	-.12	-.01	.02	-.05	.74	.67
22. No. of elderly in family	.22	-.05	-.08	.03	-.00	-.71	-.11	-.15	-.09	-.04	-.12	.15	.14	-.19	.70
23. No. of children in family	.04	-.07	-.80	.24	-.01	-.03	-.01	.01	-.01	.02	-.01	.06	-.13	-.01	.73
24. Father's job	-.78	-.08	.14	-.02	-.03	.09	-.03	-.09	.01	.12	-.06	.18	.09	-.19	.74
25. Mother's job	-.67	.09	.09	.15	-.08	.06	.11	-.04	-.12	-.16	-.16	.21	.11	-.22	.68
26. Job of first other family member	-.39	.07	-.21	-.08	-.09	-.21	.11	.10	.11	-.38	-.29	.09	-.01	-.25	.59
27. Size of farm	.77	.02	-.14	.16	.03	-.06	.00	.16	-.08	.07	.10	-.29	-.02	.12	.78
28. Frequency of purchase of newspaper	-.01	-.08	.11	.00	-.12	.02	.06	.11	.02	-.85	.03	.01	.04	.13	.80
29. Ownership of motorcycle and motorbike	-.21	-.11	-.17	-.09	.07	-.03	-.15	-.03	-.73	-.10	-.11	-.02	.10	.17	.72
30. Cars up to 1000 cc.	-.07	.04	-.19	.68	.19	-.12	.09	-.21	-.03	.02	-.17	.08	.18	-.01	.67
31. Sex	.32	.22	-.04	-.09	.31	-.06	.01	.35	.24	-.28	.21	.14	-.09	-.37	.72
32. Bathroom facilities in home	-.26	.05	.07	-.03	-.06	-.08	-.20	-.01	.01	.01	-.15	.74	-.14	.00	.73
33. Heating in home	-.19	-.10	.15	.00	.11	.25	.12	-.00	.19	.04	-.05	.69	.07	.10	.69
34. Crowding in home	.29	-.07	-.80	-.05	.05	-.03	-.04	-.09	-.08	.01	.11	-.19	.01	.04	.79

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Table 1 (Continued)

35. Washing machine	-.22	-.07	-.32	.25	.25	.00	-.33	.07	.25	.24	-.20	.23	.06	.07	.61
36. No. of holidays enjoyed	-.63	.11	.09	.08	-.02	-.02	-.08	-.05	.15	.14	.05	.15	-.04	.10	.52
37. Pleasure trips to distant places	-.02	-.06	-.02	-.06	-.07	-.11	-.85	-.18	-.09	.04	-.02	.01	-.02	-.02	.80
38. Life insurance policies	.32	.05	.18	-.10	.04	-.53	-.19	.34	-.20	-.06	.26	.11	.07	.10	.72
39. Location of the residence	-.42	.16	.08	-.25	.05	-.03	.05	.10	.57	-.21	-.32	.15	-.14	.05	.80
40. Place of birth	-.21	.13	-.10	.00	-.11	.13	.04	-.13	-.09	-.07	.15	.73	-.04	-.09	.70
41. Last grade completed before dropping out	-.32	.04	.14	-.06	.09	.10	-.02	-.49	.15	.15	-.12	.25	-.16	-.04	.54
42. Child's age	.37	.23	.47	.27	.10	.03	-.08	.04	.20	-.18	-.13	.10	-.10	.21	.66
Percentage of total variance accounted for	11.99	5.30	5.40	4.15	3.85	4.10	3.44	8.07	4.39	3.67	4.17	5.19	4.31	3.18	69.19

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Factor 1: Farm needs behind the decision to drop out

This factor explains 11.99% of the total variance of the original variables, and has the following conceptual structure.

24. The father's work is exclusively agricultural	-.78
27. The farm is large	.77
25. The mother's work is exclusively agricultural	-.67
36. Few days off in the past year	-.63
I left school:	
2. Because "I wanted to begin earning money. A good opportunity came along"	-.63
4. Because "I wanted to help out my family"	-.58
8. Because "For the job I want to do I had learned all I needed to know in previous years"	-.50
11. Because "My family didn't have the money to keep me in school"	-.44
10. Not because "The teachers treated me differently from the other pupils who did better at school"	.43
39. Isolated location of the home	-.42
26. The work of another adult family member was exclusively agricultural	-.39

The way this factor is loaded .. shows a clear and strong association, or rather causation of the abandonment of school, by the family farm "needs". Indeed, the reasons for dropping out all refer to good job opportunities, to wanting to help out the family, to the consideration that for this type of work school subjects are not important; and, secondly, these reasons are given in the context of a farm which directly experiences the condition of a going economic enterprise: father and mother and other adult members of the family work in it full time and it is rather large. Even the fact that they enjoy few or no days off indicates a very widespread lifestyle. Lastly, this interpretation of dropping out in terms of farm needs (surrendering oneself to the logic of such an enterprise) is strengthened by the absence, among the reasons for dropping out, of complaints of discrimination and the logic developed at school.

The association of these motivations with the farm "needs" naturally loses its bite when we are faced with a non-farm family--- i.e., a family which, while living in the rural environment under study, belongs jobwise to the industrial or tertiary environment.

Factor 2 - School problems as the cause of dropping out

This factor accounts for 5.30% of the total variance of the original variables, and has the following structure:

19. Grades repeated	- .64
Left school because:	
7. "I found it difficult to study because I didn't like it"	.76
3. "School was difficult, and I was a little behind"	.62
14. "The subjects they taught at school didn't interest me at all"	.49

Those who say they left school because they didn't like it, because they were a little behind, because the things taught were not interesting are the same ones who have repeated the most years in their school careers.

The decision to drop out of school is born and matures inside the school itself, in a vicious circle by which the feeling that the content of the school curriculum is not very useful generates low motivation to study it, and hence "remaining behind" and "not keeping up" and finally failing and dropping out. But this syndrome interests the rural (farm or non-farm) family at a cultural level, i.e. at the level of appreciation of its values and its specific way of analyzing reality and the "world".

Factor 3: Dropping out as related to crowded housing conditions and the presence of the young in the family

This factor, which accounts for 5.40% of the total variance, is loaded by the following variables.

23. Number of brothers and sisters in the family	- .80
34. Highly crowded living conditions	- .80
42. Dropout's young age	.47

This factor offers a precious insight into the social phenomenon of "dropouts", and hence into the rural family's attitude towards school in general. In fact, it confirms the idea that the act of dropping out early (this is what the young age of the interviewee means) from school, and the whole school career, are conditioned by the great number of siblings (r_{xy} = .21) and by the insufficient division into rooms of the dwelling (with,

consequently, considerable overcrowding) (r_{xy} = -.28).

Factor 4: Dropping out as related to family models and to contact with the outside world

This factor accounts for 4.15% of the total variance and consists of the following variables.

30. Number of automobiles of up to 1000 cc. owned	.68
17. Number of brothers who have dropped out of school	.62
18. Number of sisters who have dropped out of school	.54

The overall meaning of this factor is not very easy to grasp, precisely because of the association in it of the number of automobiles with the family dropout tradition. The possible interpretations range from psychological explanations (owning many cars as a come back for the condition of inferiority caused by dropping out) to others for which the combination of these variables in the same factor is the result of the analytical-factorial technique rather than of conceptual juxtapositions.

In any case, it is important to notice that, in the dropout's family, if this behavior pattern is common among his brothers, it is also common among his sisters; it is thus a behavior pattern that involves all the young family members.

By comparing this pattern with the socio-economic status of the family, we can determine its concrete characteristics. This can be seen from the correlation coefficients.

	In the family there are brothers and sisters who have dropped out of school	
- The father works only in agriculture		-.22
- The farm is large		.27
- The mother has little formal eudcation	- .19	-.20
- Early dropout	- .20	-.20
- Isolated home		-.25
- Female sex		.22

The sense of these correlations is the following: children, particularly girls, are more likely to drop out of school if they come from a family which is highly committed to the agricultural way of life (with full-time work and a rather large farm), where the mother has had little or no formal education (perhaps being illiterate), and where the home is isolated; and the abandonment of school occurs early (already at the elementary school). It is clear that the tendency not to drop out of school is characteristic of non-farm families, where the mother is relatively better educated, and the home is in town.

Even this fact highlights how the distinctions between farm and non-farm families, and between boy and girl, are two decisive factors in the dropout phenomenon.

Factor 5: The peer group as a cause of dropping out

This factor accounts for 3.85% of the total variance, and consists of the following two variables:

16. Number of the dropout's five best friends who have abandoned school -.78

13. I left school because "Most of my best friends at that time, not only schoolmates, dropped out" .67

The two variables confirm one another, and make us realize how important the example of the peer group is in motivating the decision to leave school.

Factor 8: Family influence as a cause of dropping out

This factor accounts for 6.07% of the total variance --- one of the highest shares of variance found. Also the content of the factor provides some important information:

15. The family was much in favor of the decision to drop out -.76

I left school because

9. "My family didn't want me to go on attending school" -.70

11. "My family didn't have the money to keep me in school" -.51

41. Dropping out of school early -.49

This factor very clearly isolates the family-inspired motivations from the others, and particularly points up the family's direct influence on the decision to drop out of school early. As a matter of fact, those who say that their family didn't want them to go on studying also say that the family did not have the money to keep them in school, that their parents were naturally very much in agreement with their dropping out ahead of time, and that they dropped out rather early on in the eight-year period of obligatory schooling.

More modest loadings of other variables highlight the fact that these motivations refer to the intrafamily relations and lifestyles. Indeed, the most pressure is exerted by a family in which the other siblings have tended to drop out of school (b_{jp} = .34 and .36) and where the family pressure is stronger on the daughters (b_{jp} = .35).

In sum, while on the one hand this factor is fairly close to Factor 1, which connects the decision to drop out with the family as an economic and farm-managing unit, in another sense it differs from the earlier factor in relating the reasons for this decision to the (more or less democratic) decision-making processes that characterize the family's fabric of relationships. It is obvious that behind both these perspectives on the family's approach to the school lies the fact of whether it is a farm or non-farm family.

Factor 9: <u>The fact that the school was far away and hard to get to as a reason for dropping out</u>

This factor accounts for 4.39% of the total variance and consists of the following variables:

29. The family's ownership of a motocycle (s)	- .73
5. I left school because "The school I had to attend was far away from home and difficult to get to"	.66
39. Location of the home	.57

As it turns out, those who motivated their decision to drop out with the fact that the school was far away and hard to get to actually live in isolated homes, and their family owns a motorcycle or cycles used for contact with the outside world; there is no doubt that this

means of transport is not very useful for taking the children to school.

From the perspective of this study, the factor allows us to varify the validity of the motivation. Moreover, it underlines the fact that the possibility of getting to school easily is a factor encouraging a successful school careeer.

Factor 13: State of health and relations with classmates as causes of dropping out

This factor accounts for 4.31% of the total variance and consists of the following variables.

I left school	
6. For my health	.77
12. Because "My classmates made me feel different from them because I was a bit behind in my studies"	.57
10. Because "The teacher(s) treated me differently from the other pupils who did better at school"	.42
20. The mother's low educational level	-.41

The meaning of this factor is this: those who acknowledge that they left school for their health also associate it with the perception that their classmates and teachers somehow discriminated against them. Such motivations and sensations ripen in an ambience where the mother is relatively well educated.

In sum, this factor does associate health reasons as a cause of dropping out with the feeling of being discriminated against by classmates and teacher(s), even though the real correlations between the variables comprising it are not very high.

4. The Relations Between the Causes of Dropping out of School Early and the Child's Personality, the Family Atmosphere, Home Lifestyles and Organization, and Farm Structure

At this point, it behooves us to consider these factors on the basis of the strength of their relations (Table 2), and then to observe how the individual causes of dropping out (or the related clusters) interact with some personal traits of the dropout, and with the family's structure and

Table 2 - Correlations between the motivations for dropping out of school early

Motivations:	Factor 1				Factor 13		Factor 2			F.5	Factor 8		F.9
	2	4	8	10	12	6	3	7	14	13	9	11	5
Factor 1:													
2. Desire to earn money right away	-												
4. "I wanted to help out my family	.41	-											
8. "I've studied enough already"	.43	.28	-										
10. "The teachers treated me differently"	-.36	-.31	-.23	-									
Factor 13:													
12. "My classmates made me feel different"	-.12	-.17	-.19	.38	-								
6. Health	.04	-.05	-.11	.18	.19	-							
Factor 2:													
3. "Studying was difficult"	.16	.10	.05	.13	-.04	.16	-						
7. "Studying was hard because I didn't like it"	.17	-.12	.14	.03	-.04	-.12	.34	-					
14. "The things taught didn't interest me"	.30	.10	.40	-.25	-.06	-.11	.12	.40	-				
Factor 5:													
13. "My friends didn't go on"	.13	.03	-.07	-.08	-.00	-.14	.07	.06	-.03	-			
Factor 8:													
9. "My family didn't want me to go on	.29	.37	.33	-.19	-.04	-.12	.12	-.10	.15	.20	-		
11. "My family didn't have the money	.37	.55	.28	-.35	-.07	-.01	.03	-.19	.09	.08	.62	-	
Factor 9:													
5. "The school was far away and hard to get to"	.11	.12	.07	.05	-.02	.10	.14	.18	.08	-.08	.01	.08	-

function, with some of its ways of relating to, or cutting itself off from, the outside world, with the organization of the house, and with the family's relation to the farm.

Table 3 gives the matrix of the correlations of these characteristics with the causes of dropping out. It behooves us now to examine one by one the clusters of motivations identified with factor analysis.

The first causes of dropping out relate to the desire to work before finishing school, to the intention of helping out one's family, and to the observation that school is largely irrelevant for this purpose, and have their origin in the farm and job situation of the agricultural family. Indeed, these causes are found where the farm is rather large (r_{xy} = -.37, -.48, -.36), when the father (r_{xy} = .32, .39, .29), the mother (r_{xy} = .37, .23, .35) and other adults (r_{xy} = .22, .20, .25) work on it, and when there is a tendency not to communicate much with the outside world (both because of stable residence in the same house (r_{xy} = .23, .12, .26) and on account of the lack of holidays (r_{xy} = .31, .40, .32)).

Aside from this environment, which is strictly linked to the productive structure of the farm, there are only occasional significant connections, relating more to one than to another of the causes. It thus turns out that those who dropped out for these reasons had not repeated many years (r_{xy} = .08, .21, .13) and left school already in the elementary grades (r_{xy} = .18, .30, .12): moreover, these reasons, linked as they are to a low estimate of the value of what the school has to offer, are manifested at a rather mature age (r_{xy} = -.22, -.14, -.26). The family environment seems to have had only a certain influence on the causes ascribed to dropout behavior patterns experienced by the sisters (r_{xy} = -.21, -.20, -.10). Other family traits have no influence, nor does the dropout's sex. Lastly, the motivation of wanting to help out the family is verified and justified by the modest organization of bathroom facilities (r_{xy} = .28) and heating (r_{xy} = .25), and by over-crowding (r_{xy} = -.22).

In short, these reasons for leaving school originate more in the productive organization and home environment of the family than in the

Table 3 - Correlations between the adolescent's personal, family, and economic conditions and his reasons for dropping out of school

Conditions experienced:	REASONS FOR DROPPING OUT												
	Connected with the farm			"The teachers discriminated against me"	Health and classmates		Difficulties at school			"My friends didn't go on"	Connected with the family		"School was far away and hard to get to"
	Desire to earn money right away	"I wanted to help out my family"	"I've studied enough already"		"For my health"	"My classmates made me feel different"	"School was hard. I was behind"	I didn't like school"	"The things taught didn't interest me"		"My family didn't want me to go on"	"My family didn't have the money"	
Personal conditions:													
1. At present working outside the farm	(-.22)	-.04	-.19	.05	-.13	.04	.03	-.03	(-.20)	-.01	-.07	-.06	.02
11. Female sex	-.07	-.14	-.06	-.09	-.02	-.02	.01	.16	.18	-.03	-.13	(-.20)	.07
12. Advanced age	(-.22)	-.14	(-.26)	(.31)	-.09	.01	(.29)	.12	-.01	-.02	(-.24)	(-.28)	.03
41. Left school late	.18	(.30)	.12	-.18	-.10	.02	.06	.04	.12	.13	(.31)	(.41)	.10
19. Repeated many grades	.08	(.21)	.13	-.07	-.04	-.15	(-.21)	(-.36)	(-.23)	.08	(.25)	(.32)	.01
Family conditions:													
20. Mother's education	.14	.19	.15	-.17	-.16	(-.27)	-.02	.09	.10	-.09	.16	.15	-.06
21. Advanced age of father	-.18	-.09	-.09	.19	-.08	-.02	-.04	-.04	-.06	-.00	(-.25)	-.18	.02
22. Number of elderly in family	-.12	-.10	-.07	.04	.09	-.05	-.02	-.13	-.11	-.09	(.21)	(.20)	-.05
23. Number of young people	.11	-.11	.13	(-.25)	-.03	(-.26)	-.10	-.11	-.01	-.05	.07	.17	-.04
15. Parents against school	.06	.19	.02	.13	-.05	.03	-.04	(-.21)	-.14	.11	(.47)	(.29)	-.07
17. No. of brothers who dropped out	-.00	-.16	-.02	.04	.00	-.09	-.03	.03	.03	-.03	(-.26)	(-.20)	.03
18. No. of sisters who dropped out	(-.21)	(-.20)	-.10	.17	.07	-.03	-.13	-.03	.03	-.08	(-.31)	(-.25)	(-.23)
24. No. of friends who dropped out	-.01	-.02	.11	-.05	.12	-.08	-.03	.08	.11	(-.35)	-.08	-.01	-.00

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Table 2 (Continued)

Life styles:												
26. Daily papers often read	-.01	.16	.24	.12	.05	.00	-.12	.09	.02	-.14	-.09	.08	.08
28. Many holidays	.31	.40	.32	-.13	.03	-.07	.22	.14	.19	.11	.21	.28	.17
37. Trips outside Italy	-.08	.15	.04	.12	-.09	.07	.14	-.19	-.22	-.17	.19	.14	.00
38. Life insurance owned	.13	.25	.13	-.30	.10	-.03	.13	.09	.11	-.12	.03	.10	.01
Housing conditions:													
32. Two bathrooms in home	.09	.28	.09	-.17	-.09	-.11	.12	.07	.09	-.04	.15	.18	.09
33. Radiators in home	.10	.25	-.07	-.09	.03	-.14	.06	.07	.03	.07	.09	.25	.12
34. Home overcrowded	-.01	-.22	.05	-.11	-.00	-.09	-.16	-.19	-.07	-.02	.07	.09	-.09
35. Washing machine in home	.23	.11	-.05	-.05	.00	-.01	.05	-.07	-.06	-.01	.09	.24	.12
Work conditions:													
24. Father not in farm work	.32	.39	.29	-.26	.09	-.01	.14	.09	.10	.10	.31	.32	.26
25. Mother not in farm work	.37	.23	.35	-.20	.08	.06	.14	.12	.15	.10	.21	.26	.08
26. First other family member in farm work	.22	.20	.25	-.16	.02	-.06	.04	.02	.13	-.15	.08	.29	.07
27. Large farm	-.37	-.48	-.36	.32	-.03	.01	-.16	-.06	-.14	-.13	-.32	-.42	-.10
39. House in town	.18	.31	.14	-.21	-.08	-.12	.10	.30	.07	.03	-.03	.15	.40
40. Born far away from present residence	.23	.12	.26	-.23	-.09	-.09	.11	-.01	.24	-.02	.26	.23	.09
29. Many motocycles	.13	.16	.13	-.08	.04	.13	-.15	-.11	.13	.10	.16	.11	-.2
30. Many cars of up to 1000 cc.	.12	-.04	-.02	.05	.11	.04	.11	-.04	.02	.09	.08	.21	-.0

cultural and role-related equilibria of family life. But the result is still a very early abandonment of school, even though not many years have been repeated and without discrimination between males and females.

Teacher discrimination as a cause of dropping out is associated with a non-farm family (both the father (r_{xy} = -.26) and the mother (r_{xy} = -.20) have non-farm employment; there is no farm (r_{xy} = .32); the family lives in town (r_{xy} = -.21) even if it was not born there (r_{xy} = -.23); and the father, with the future of his family in mind, has taken out a life insurance policy (r_{xy} = -.30). In the family there are other minors (r_{xy} = -.25) --- this is accounted for by the fact that it is a young family (r_{xy} = .19) --- but no dropout models to emulate (r_{xy} = .17). Moreover, the mother tends to have a rather high education level (which means, at most, that she has finished the junior high school) (r_{xy} = -.17). Lastly, this perceived discrimination becomes a reason for leaving school in the higher grades of the obligatory school, i.e. in the secondary school (r_{xy} = -.18). This cause is not related to having repeated many grades (r_{xy} = -.07) or to male or female sex (r_{xy} = -.09).

In fine, this discrimination on the part of teachers is felt more acutely by a family which is urban and not agricultural, which is also open to the outside world and has a higher cultural level than the farm family (at least in comparison with the average level of the place); it lays bare a more direct and more deeply felt non-reciprocal relationship between the rural family and the school (cf. also L. Macaric and S.Sarti, 1970, p.1514). This relationship leads to a new type of "hidden" selection, based less on grades repeated and more on a discrimination against the youngster within the class, relegating him to the group of those who "don't follow" and who are abandoned "to their fate" (M.Livolsi et al., 1974). This is the kind of selection rampant in the present situation where the obligatory school passes almost everyone.

An analogous situation characterizes the decision to drop out because the youth feels discriminated against by his schoolmates; this discrimination is the other side of the coin of that practiced by the teacher. It is clear that also in this case the decision to drop out early is not affected by sex or years repeated, but is rather taken in a large family

with many small children and a mother with a fair level of education. The only difference between this type of horizontal discrimination and the vertical type just discussed lies in the fact that all the families surveyed, whether those of factory workers or of farm laborers, stress its importance.

The second factor groups together the causes directly linked with the studies: the difficulties encountered and the lack of interest in them. In this case, too, the two aspects support and accentuate each other.

The situations in which these motivations for dropping out come to be formed are strictly linked to the child's school career, i.e. to the number of years repeated (r_{xy} = -.21, -.36, -.23), rather than to the kind of family (factory or farm-worker's) and its social and job status. If anything, one may add that the parents are reluctant, if not downright opposed, to giving their approval to an early abandonment of school for these reasons of little success. In the case of these dropouts there is the same mechanism of expulsion from school and immediate introduction into the working world that is found in those who finish their obligatory schooling, albeit not brilliantly (5).

The causes that directly involve the family and its will and equilibria are very different from these. In effect, these motivations, while on the one hand they originate in a family that works and manages the farm and lives a rather stable and self-contained home life, in a dwelling without many modern conveniences, on the other hand fall on, and penalize, a child who has not repeated many grades (r_{xy} = .25 and .32), is female (r_{xy} = -.13 and -.20), and above all has been forced to leave school very early (r_{xy} = .31 and .41). Here we are faced with an imposition of authority which is much "purer" than that found for the causes related to the "farm's needs", since there the abandonment of school was more mediated by family solidarity and the low estimation of the theoretical knowledge given by the school.

The interpretation of this fact is to be made more in terms of the family's power; this becomes explicit in the correlations (all significant)

of the relations and behavior patterns and family structure with the giving of these motivations for leaving school. In fact, the family's imposition and its economic hardships are used to explain dropping out of school early especially by those who find their parents in complete agreement with their decision (r_{xy} = .47 and .29), whose sisters (r_{xy} =-.31 and -.25) and brothers (r_{xy} = -.26 and -.20) have also dropped out, who live in a rather aging family (r_{xy} = -.25 and -.13 with the father's age), who live in a family without the elderly (r_{xy} = .21 and .20) who could do those little farm or household chores otherwise done by pre-adolescent children, who have a mother with little formal schooling (r_{xy} = .16 and .15) even for their general environment of little education. Such a family combines scant sensitivity toward the children's future outside the farm, dropout behavior patterns, and a conception of the child still centered around the idea of socializing oneself in a farm or non-farm, rural or urban, society, depending on the conditions in which one comes (and in certain ways wants) to find oneself and to which one has to adapt.

The last cause of dropping out is connected with the school's being far away and hard to get to. It interests only 9.7% of all cases and is naturally more intensely felt by those who live in isolated homes (r_{xy} =.44).

In fine, the discussion on the relations between the different causes of dropping out of school early and the environment and atmosphere in which they originate has brought out the following connections: the desire to go to work right away and to help out the family is strictly linked to the farm needs; the perception of teacher discrimination is more characteristic of factory-workers', or in any case non-farm, families, and, together with the perception of discrimination by classmates, it is linked with certain family traits (the mother's education level and the presence of smaller children in the family); school difficulties are indeed reported by children who have repeated many grades; the imposition of the family's will is more closely connected with the family relationships and the function assigned to the children in the family's future; and the distance from school is associated with living in an isolated home.

5. Conclusions

The image of one's role in the world of work, and of the school in relation to it, is the commonest cause of dropping out of school, given as it was by 58.6% of those interviewed. School difficulties, confirmed by grades repeated, are a distant second (35.6%). The family's impositions and its internal relationships follow in third place (22.3%); peer group influence occupies fourth place (17.5%). These are followed, in decreasing order of importance, by health reasons (12.6%), in-class teacher discrimination (11.2%) and discrimination by classmates (9.7%), and lastly by the school's being far away and hard to get to (9.7%).

These clusters of causes add up to more than 100%, indicating that the decision to drop out of school early is unlikely to be the result of a single, clearly defined motivation.

The first conclusion to be drawn from this quantification of the importance of the various causes, also keeping in mind the farm and family relations and contexts in which they occur, regards the fact that about 60% of the youngsters left school to help out the family or because they do not see any real use for what the school teaches, and another 22.3% left school because of family pressure in this sense, even though in both cases the school record was not very bad at the time of dropping out. This shows how very distant the school is from the rural family; this social distance already came out in our study Contadino, una scelta?, though there it concerned how the family could use the school after the child had finished his obligatory schooling. In both cases the farm family's relationship with the school is instrumental: either it serves to improve one's social status, and so it is used to obtain a diploma, or else it does not serve to attain this social status and then it is abandoned. Therefore, beyond the conception of the child's future (the child as a projection of the future rather than as immediately available manpower), we are here faced with the farm family's cultural non-integration in the values on which the school is based; i.e., it is absent from them, even when the family displays the good will to approach the teacher and supervise

the child's homework. In these conditions, the school, especially for families very deeply rooted in traditional values, becomes useless.

On the other hand, the causes of dropping out which are linked to school difficulties, as well as to the feeling of being discriminated against by teachers and classmates, bring the relation with the school inside the classroom; they concern not only the content imparted, but also the methods, styles, and rhythms by which the content becomes schooling and education, and hence also a comparison of oneself, one's family, and one's values with other boys and girls and with the cultural values of other families. This leads to a negative and punitive selection, which results in dropping out. In this case, the discrimination is shifted to the level of the school, in the comparison with the values of the teacher and peers, rather than being perceived at a family level, which is moreover included by the "instrumental use" value of the school for the improvement of the child's social status.

Leaving aside the very specific causes of dropping out which regard the child's health and the distance between home and school, a third conclusion regards the considerable influence that the peer group subculture has in causing the decision to drop out. This influence has been highlighted by many studies.

At this point, we may repropose the starting perspective of this paper: namely, that early abandonment of obligatory schooling by rural (and especially farm) children is a radical indicator, still valid, of the non-existent relationship between the school and the rural world. It is only an indicator, because it is conceivable that, in Italy, the phenomenon might dwindle away and disappear, but as a matter of fact it "indicates" a phenomenon which is still real and concrete. To be sure, the school has enormously limited its power to fail, but it has done little to include the cultural, social, and work reality of the farm world in its didactic, educational, and cultural schemata; and, to make matters worse, it exercises a "hidden selection" consisting in discrimination against the pupil within the classroom, carried out by the

teacher with the help of the pupil's classmates.

How can this vicious circle be broken? The first and most obvious way is to incorporate the complex farm and rural culture into the culture, teaching methods, and contents of the school. This means to "re-create" the school; rather, to create a new one.

NOTES

(1) For these cultural aspects, see the dimensions of the concepts of work in agriculture and work in industry developed by parents and children in the four Italian provinces studied in the analysis of job and school choices made by the children after finishing their obligatory schooling: A.Gasparini, Mondo familiare: atteggiamenti verso il lavoro in agricoltura e il lavoro nell'industria, in A.Gasparini and B. Benvenuti, Contadino: una scelta?, AIPA, Bologna 1973, vol.III, pp.151-219; A.Gasparini, Immagini del lavoro e scelta professionale, in "Formazione e Cambiamento", no. 3-4, 1976.

(2) On these aspects, the researches carried out by Davis (1941-44), Maddy (1943), Havighust (1949), Milner (1951-56), Himmelweit (1955), and Deutsch et al. (1960-68) are classics.

(3) These discussions took place during a methodological course held in 1972 at the City University of New York under the guidance of Prof. Edgar F.Borgatta.

(4) The indicators used to define the socio-economic status (SES) were submitted separately to factor analysis (in the solution of the principal components). The variance of the 24 variables turned out to be accounted for by 5 factors for a total of 49.605%. The first factor referred to the "economic and work condition of the family", the second to "the young in relation to the home and to the ownership of means of transport", the third to "parents' formal education level", the fourth to "family structure without elderly and the existence of dropout behavior patterns in the family", the fifth to "frequent use of printed mass media".

(5) This is even more true of the schools in Southern Italy. See B.Benvenuti and A.Gasparini, Contadino, una scelta?, Paravia, Torino 1978, pp.198-99.

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